

free those laymen and parsons who were of his way of thinking from the control of the Pope and Bishops, he proposed to abolish the existing forms of Church government. But he never devised any other machinery, such as a presbytery, to take their place. The time had not come for definite schemes, such as were possible and necessary in the days of Luther, Calvin and Cranmer, for success was not even distantly in sight. The position of the Lollards was anomalous, standing half inside and half outside the Church.

Such were the principal questions that Wycliffe, during the last few years of his life, forced on to the consideration of his countrymen, who had hitherto been famous among Europeans for their ready fidelity to all that the established authorities bade them believe. It must be said of Wycliffe, as he said of the Bishops, \* by his works must we know him/ for there is no other record of him left, except strings of abusive epithets from his enemies. Fortunately his written works, long preserved among the Hussites of Bohemia after Church inquisition had destroyed them in England, have lately been edited by zealous and careful scholars, who have now set before us nearly as much knowledge of Wycliffe as we can ever hope to obtain. The want of any clear picture of his personality goes far to account for the small interest taken in a man of such extraordinary powers of mind, who has exerted so great an influence on the history of our country. It is probable that few will ever study his writings. The interest and meaning of his Latin books are obscured to the modern reader by the jargon of the mediaeval schools. His English pamphlets, written in the simple and vigorous language of that day, well repay study. But even these have a certain want of attractiveness, owing to the predominance of hard intellectual and moral qualities over the emotions. But although his writings tell us little about himself, we can read in their every line the severity which appeared also in his actions, and was certainly the characteristic of the man.